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To: HSSframework
Subject: Modern US and world history

Hi. As a former social science teacher this drives me nuts. The history that our students most need to know is that of the past 40 years. It gets scant attention at the end of the US history and World History courses. The end of the Soviet State, the emergence of China, the conflicts in the Middle East, the impact of social media and advertising on modern politics, health care reform, race relations and a hundred other topics are going to be “covered” in the last unit of the course. (If the teacher gets there). It is probably time to either add another course in US history/world history (in Virginia, World History is required in both the 9th and 10th grade) or reduce the coverage of industrialization, the 20’s, the New Deal, and WW2. It is ridiculous that our kids know about the Battle of the Bulge but have no concept of the US involvement in the two Iraq wars other than the distorted views they see on social media and on the news. They can identify the Robber Barons, but have no clue about the impact of the modern oil cartel, the outsourcing of low skilled jobs to developing nations or the impact of Gates, Jobs and the Social Media world. Our students should have literate opinions that they can argue and defend about US foreign policy, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, immigration, race relations, and where social issues (gay marriage, legalization of Marijuana, abortion) fit in the scheme of modern history. They need a deep understanding of the last recession more so than the great depression. They need to understand the root causes of the “Black lives Matter” movement more than Brown vs the Board of Education. I taught a separate elective course on the history of the 60’s and 70’s in the early 80’s because the traditional history course did not do justice to important events from that time period. Those events are 40-50 years old now. I am disappointed that this appears to be just a cursory organization of that which we are already teaching. It might make more sense to just take some major themes and reorganize all of the courses thematically rather than chronologically.